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nawal[72]), which inhabit the hills, caves, deep water pools, etc. They are extremely malevolent and they are ever ready to injure the people, causing disease or death. They are especially dangerous after sundown, when the fear of them makes a coward of the most daring and courageous Indians.

The Indian has a natural reluctance to reveal his religious ideas, especially such as he suspects to seem ridiculous to a stranger. It is therefore very difficult to obtain reliable information from them pertaining to this subject. At the death of a person the material body undergoes dissolution and one or more spirits are set free and roam about doing mischief, until they are directed by the sukya to the Hereafter. Animals likewise have spirits, or they may be possessed by evil spirits.

Conspicuous hills are generally haunted by evil spirits, and the latter are said to have carved the petroglyphs found at certain large river falls. Peculiarly shaped rocks are supposed to have been formerly human beings, who have become petrified, generally as a punishment.[73] Not only may sentient beings be changed into rocks, but they may also originally have issued from them. A Sumu legend traces the origin of that tribe to the Kaunapa Hill on the left bank of Rio Patuca, to a place where petrified navels are said to exist.

Trees and plants appear to be animated by spirits (M.: *lilka;* T., P.: *wayani;* U.: *wayaka*), which affect their growth and the ripening of their fruits. In order to increase the yield of a fruit tree, or to render barren trees productive, several objects are placed on their branches after having been blown upon (M.: *yabakan*) by the sukya. Vegetal attraction charms, which are carried for good luck in the various walks of life, would seem to point toward an original belief in plants possessing associated spirits.

Indians will keep at a certain distance from spirits and do not look at them nor point to them, nor even talk of them, as they might materialize, for, "speak of the devil and he is sure to appear." They even refuse to look at certain places haunted by evil spirits, and if they have to pass at close distance they will turn away the face in an opposite direction.

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[72] This word has evidently a close philological connection with *Nauallí*, the name of a magical high priest of the Aztecs; he was celibate and was supposed to assume animal shape at will. From his name is derived the term "nagualism," a species of sorcery still existing among the ignorant Ladinos in certain regions of Central America. *Nawa* or *nawah* is also the Sumu name for "puma" or "jaguar." Cf. also *nawal* "sorcerer" and *nawal-ih* "to predict, to enchant," in the Quiché language of Guatemala.

[73] On the right bank of Rio Coco, opposite Yaluk Hill, there are some rocks which are believed to be the petrified remains of a great Sumu sukya, named Panamaka, who lived on the said hill.

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The Indians do not eat it, believing that by so doing they will become forgetful like the tortoise itself, and become lost in the bush or misplace things, and the like.

Strange animals are regarded as evil spirits and their appearance is a bad omen; the Indians do not dare to kill them. Heath, while stopping with his Miskito crew from Kiplapihni at an empty house at Burimak (middle Rio Coco), came across a strange bat, which event he relates as follows: "We saw clinging under the palm roof a small snow-white bat. Some felt sure that it would suck our blood in the night; so it was killed, but turned out to be a perfectly harmless creature with very beautiful fur. But now, as no one present had seen such a white bat before, some declared that its coming was a bad omen; others that it was sent by an evil spirit, or was even more likely itself to be an evil spirit; that the man who killed it would soon die of a pernicious fever, etc. It took some time to calm the fears of the women especially." (Heath, b: 377.)

CHARMS, AMULETS, TALISMANS.—Some of the ornaments are undoubtedly supposed to act as charms, amulets, or talismans, as they are worn chiefly by the women and children, who are especially exposed to the malicious influence of evil spirits. In fact the different works of art and modes of decoration, including ornaments, paint, mutilation, scarification, tattoo, etc., seem to have had originally a religious and magical significance rather than a desire to embellish the appearance. Red and black paint is still regarded a prophylactic against disease.

Charms are used for managing the opposite sex, as a cure for barrenness by women, in order to have a male child, and for luck in hunting and fishing. Jaguar teeth are carried as talismans for courage, strength, and to stimulate virility and excite venery.

Charms on fruit trees have the object of increasing their yield and keeping birds, animals, and even man from plundering them. In order to render fruit trees more productive the Miskito drive a nail in the side of the stem facing the west. When they make staffs for turtle spears they also prefer utilizing the west side of the stem of the pejivalle palm, believing that part of the trunk to be more durable and resistant.[78]

Celts or stone axes, which are occasionally dug up in the fields, are regarded as "thunderbolts," and were worn in former days as amulets for protection against lightning. They were also supposed to render the bearer brave and enduring. They are considered very efficacious in healing certain diseases, and the sukya makes use of them in practicing his rites of sorcery. On account of these proper-

[78] The Creoles, in making tea from the medicinal bark of certain trees, likewise prefer using the bark on the side facing the sunset.

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ties the Indians will part with stone axes only for a comparatively large sum of money.

Similar superstitions about these stone celts are held by the other populations of this part of Central America. The local names "thunderbolt," "thunderstone" (Creoles), "piedra de raya" (Spanish), *alwani mahbra*, *imyula mahbra* (M.), *alwana suma* (S.), *dama up* (Rama) in themselves point to a belief in their celestial origin. They are supposed to come down from the sky with the lightning and they are held responsible for the damage done at such an occasion. They penetrate the soil to a depth of 7 feet and then slowly work their way upward, reaching the surface again in seven years. It is claimed that sometimes such a thunderbolt may be found in a tree which has been struck by lightning. The surface of these celts is always smooth; often they are highly polished. Their color is always supposed to be identical with that of the soil in which they have been discovered.[76]

DIVINING ROD.—The Sumu of Rio Prinsapolca are said to make use of some sort of a divining rod (M.: *smaya kâikaya*;[77] T., P.: *tiñ amañnis*; U.: *ya bohnaka*), consisting of a smooth rod of either cacao wood or wild cane; it is about 3 feet in length, and a cotton thread is tied around the center. The Sumu appear to use the *tapúa* for the same purpose as the Jicaque of Honduras; with its aid they claim to be able to obtain almost any information regarding the future, their luck in fishing, hunting, love-making, etc.

I have not been able to see any of these rods, nor did I obtain any definite details regarding the manner in which they are used. The following account is taken from Collinson (b: 152): "Another very common and favorite method of unraveling the unknown is an incantation by a sukya. He commences operations by cutting a small wand, peeling it, and tying a short string to its top. He then strokes it repeatedly, muttering in undertone words supposed to form an incantation; after this has been done for some time, one end of the stick is placed in the left elbow, and the right arm is stretched out to the string end.. If it exactly reaches this when extended to its full

[76] Some of the Creoles and Ladinos place stone axes in their water tanks and earthen water jars, in order to keep the drinking water pure and clean and at the same time preserve themselves from certain maladies. These celts are also believed to protect the houses from lightning, and for that purpose are suspended from the roof. A "true thunderbolt," it is claimed, may be determined by tying a thread firmly around the middle of the celt, and then attempting to burn the thread. This may be done by holding a match to it, or suspending it over a lighted candle, or even throwing it in the fire. If the celt is genuine the thread will not burn. Of course such an experiment can be made successfully with any smooth stone to which a thread has been tied so firmly that there is no air intervening, thus retarding combustion of the thread until the stone itself is hot enough to burn it.

[77] Lit.: "to have a branch."

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length the wand will reveal the truth; if not the string must be altered and the process repeated until it is in its right position. Questions relating to the present and future will then be answered by the sukya, correctly as he states, though I must confess that the queries I propounded were never replied to very successfully, but I was an unbeliever, and it is a notorious fact that spirits are put out of their calculations by the incredulous."

CONTROL OF RAIN AND WIND.—Rain and wind can, according to the Indians, be produced or stopped at will by human, animal, or spirit agency. Thus while paddling down Rio Plátano with a Miskito crew, I noticed clouds gathering windward and threatening rain. The captain of the boat, upon noticing them, motioned the rain with the right hand to pass on, with the following words: "Do not come here as we do not want to get wet now! We have no shirt nor trousers with us to change, and if you will wet us we will have to remain in the moist clothes the whole day long and suffer from the cold. Pass on to those indolent and good-for-nothing people on Rio Patuca; they are all at home now lying in their hammocks."

Bell (b: 157) relates a similar experience with the Miskito of Rio Prinsapolca: The Indians, hearing the rain coming by the noise in the distant bush, vainly tried to keep it off by blowing with their mouths and driving the breath away on either side of their faces. They also spoke to the rain, telling it of the uselessness of its coming to wet them, thus: "Pass on, pass on; we are all wet already. You need not come here; pass on to the head of the river. There is gunpowder and tinder lying uncovered on the rocks. A man is burning a plantation there; pass on quickly, lest another shower wet it before you."

Often when the Indians heard a shower coming they pushed their canoe quietly under the thick bush to hide until the rain had passed, and were much annoyed if any one talked or made any noise. The killing of a howling monkey was also believed to bring rain, as that animal belongs to the water spirit, who will be angry at such an act (Bell, b: 157).

While proceeding up Rio Coco from the port Cabo Gracias a Dios to the Miskito settlement of the same name, my two paddlers put up a small sail, and then kept on whistling in order to call the wind to help them in their work. When all their efforts were of no avail they became rather vexed and made some disobliging remarks about the "lazy wind" (*pasa sriñwankira*).

ECLIPSES.—An eclipse of the moon is said by the Sumu to be caused by the jaguar devouring that heavenly body; their name in itself points to this belief (*wóñko nawa kasne, wóñko nawa kasya;* lit.: "the jaguar is eating the moon"). At a lunar eclipse, no matter at what time of the night it occurs, the Sumu get up immediately in order

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to frighten that feline and drive it away, by shooting arrows at it, making great fires, and beating drums. The same belief is held by these Indians with regard to a solar eclipse (T., P.: *ma nawa kaswe;* U.: *ma nawa kasya* "the jaguar is eating the sun").[76]

The Miskito, however, do not share in this superstition; they call the lunar eclipse *kati di-skura alkan* "the moon has caught his mother-in-law," and the solar eclipse *yu di-skura alkan* "the sun has caught his mother-in-law."[77]

SNAKE CHARMING.—Snake charming is practiced on the Mosquito Coast by Negroes chiefly (native Africans especially), but some of the Miskito are also supposed to know this art. In order to remain invulnerable against the bite of any snake, these people are said to drink from time to time an infusion made by boiling the guaco weed (*Mikania* sp.) in water. The same effect may be obtained by applying a little juice from the latter plant into a small incision in the skin. The chewing of a few guaco leaves every day is also supposed to be an efficacious preventive against snake bites. The best snake charmers are said to eat the head of the reptile after having extracted the poisonous fangs; others merely cook their food with a little fat extracted over a slow fire from the head of a snake. The snake charmer must submit to restrictions in diet during certain periods of the year; he must also abstain from sexual intercourse with other women but his own, lest he might lose his powers.

In order to capture a poisonous snake without any danger to himself, the snake charmer chews a little bark from a certain shrub (M.: *pyuta sdiks*) and then spits upon the head of the reptile. The latter is immediately stupefied and becomes absolutely harmless.

Many people are supposed to keep tame snakes in their houses or fields in order to guard their property. These reptiles act as watchdogs and will bite any intruder. The more ignorant Ladinos, who call such a snake "sontin" (from the English word "something," it appears), believe that this habit is practiced by almost all the Indians and Negroes of the Mosquito Coast.

CAMOTILLO POISON.—This is supposed to be a deadly poison with the aid of which the intended victim will die at a specified date, if everything has been prepared the right way. Even if the victim should know that camotillo has been administered to him he can not escape from a lingering death, for science knows of no way to counteract its effects.

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[76] The Cuna Indians of Panama believe that eclipses of the sun or of the moon are caused by a demon—half dog, half woman—which starts eating those heavenly bodies; these Indians drive the demon away by shooting at it with miniature arrows (E. Nordenskiöld, Comparative Ethnographical Studies, vol. F, pt. 2, Gothenburg, 1920, p. 20).

[77] Sun and moon are considered masculine in the Miskito language.

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773 same way that manioc is planted. Some of the tribes recount a myth of a great flood. The *Jicaque* believe in two benevolent deities and a female 776 god of evil. No offerings are made to the "good" deities, but attempts are made to placate the "evil" one, a female who is responsible for all misfortune and who causes death.

775 The *Sumo* and *Mosquito* and possibly the *Paya* believe that after death the soul makes its way eastward over a difficult route to a nether world of plenty and happiness. The description of the route traveled and the acts performed by the survivors of the deceased to aid the progress of his soul on this road differ from tribe to tribe. Under certain conditions the soul may remain about the house of the deceased and even occupy his former belongings, including domestic animals. For this reason these things must be destroyed.

776 The *Sumo*, *Mosquito*, and *Paya* believe that the world is populated with 789 innumerable spirits. These haunt hills, caves, deep pools of water, and other places, and they are responsible for most misfortunes including sickness and death. A large part of the work of shamans is to placate these spirits, to drive them out of sick people, and otherwise to destroy them. Protection from the bad spirits is afforded by amulets and charms.

SHAMANISM

756 Most *Sumo* and *Mosquito* settlements have a shaman, who may take part in secular affairs but whose chief duty is to cure the sick. Shamans possess some spiritual power, but very little is known of the various rituals through which it is acquired. Sons and sometimes sons-in-law may 755 succeed a shaman. Curing varies in detail according to the individual shaman and the spirits addressed. A shaman goes into a trance in which he contacts the spirits and, in one way or another, drives them out of the afflicted person. Curing rituals also include songs, dances, and the use of painted sticks, carved figures, and other paraphernalia. Some diseases are cured by the imposition of diets, the prohibition of sexual intercourse, and other restrictions. Complicated diseases or village-wide epidemics are isolated and receive special medical and ceremonial treatment. Infections, snake bites, and diseases such as malaria are cured by both shamans and laymen, the latter using infusions of herbs and a large number of native medicines. Steam baths followed by a cold plunge are also employed. Baths in hot springs and partial burial in hot sand are common practices, especially among the *Sumo*. When surgery is necessary a shaman employs [778] knives made of obsidian, flint, bone, and such. Ashes, tobacco, wax, and resin are used as antiseptics.

766 A shaman may also prophesy the future or determine the route hunters [787] should take in order to find game. By conjuring, a shaman may cause [754] harm to come to people. A shaman may be retained by a person to eliminate an enemy.